

# The politics of belonging



*How British politics is undergoing a sea change away from  
freedom and towards security*

# About

This is a new Onward project led by Lord James O'Shaughnessy, former No.10 Director of Policy for David Cameron and life peer, and Will Tanner, Director of Onward and former No.10 Deputy Director of Policy for Theresa May. It aims to understand the reasons for the collapse of two party politics and the decline in liberal democratic values in Britain today.

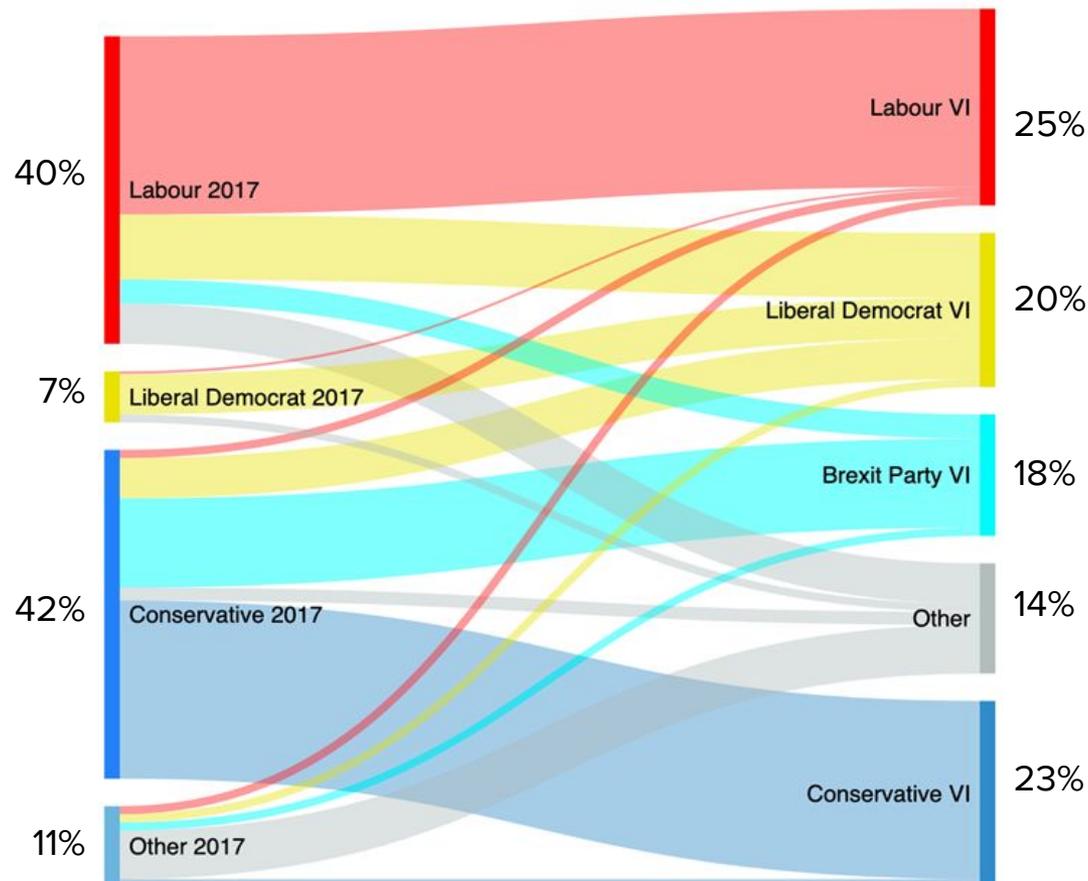
Onward is a new campaigning thinktank whose mission is to renew the centre right for the next generation by coming up with bold new policy ideas and reaching out to new groups of people. Onward's advisory board, chaired by Lord Finkelstein, includes leading members of the 2015 and 2017 intakes, including Neil O'Brien, Tom Tugendhat, Kemi Badenoch, Gillian Keegan, Rachel Maclean, Chris Philp and John Lamont. Please visit our website at [www.ukonward.com](http://www.ukonward.com).

Hanbury Strategy is a leading political strategy firm and member of the British Polling Council. Hanbury conducted an online smartphone poll of 5,073 people in a representative GB sample between 21 and 29 June 2019. The results were weighted to the profile of all adults aged 18+. Full results are available at [www.hanburystrategy.com/polling](http://www.hanburystrategy.com/polling).

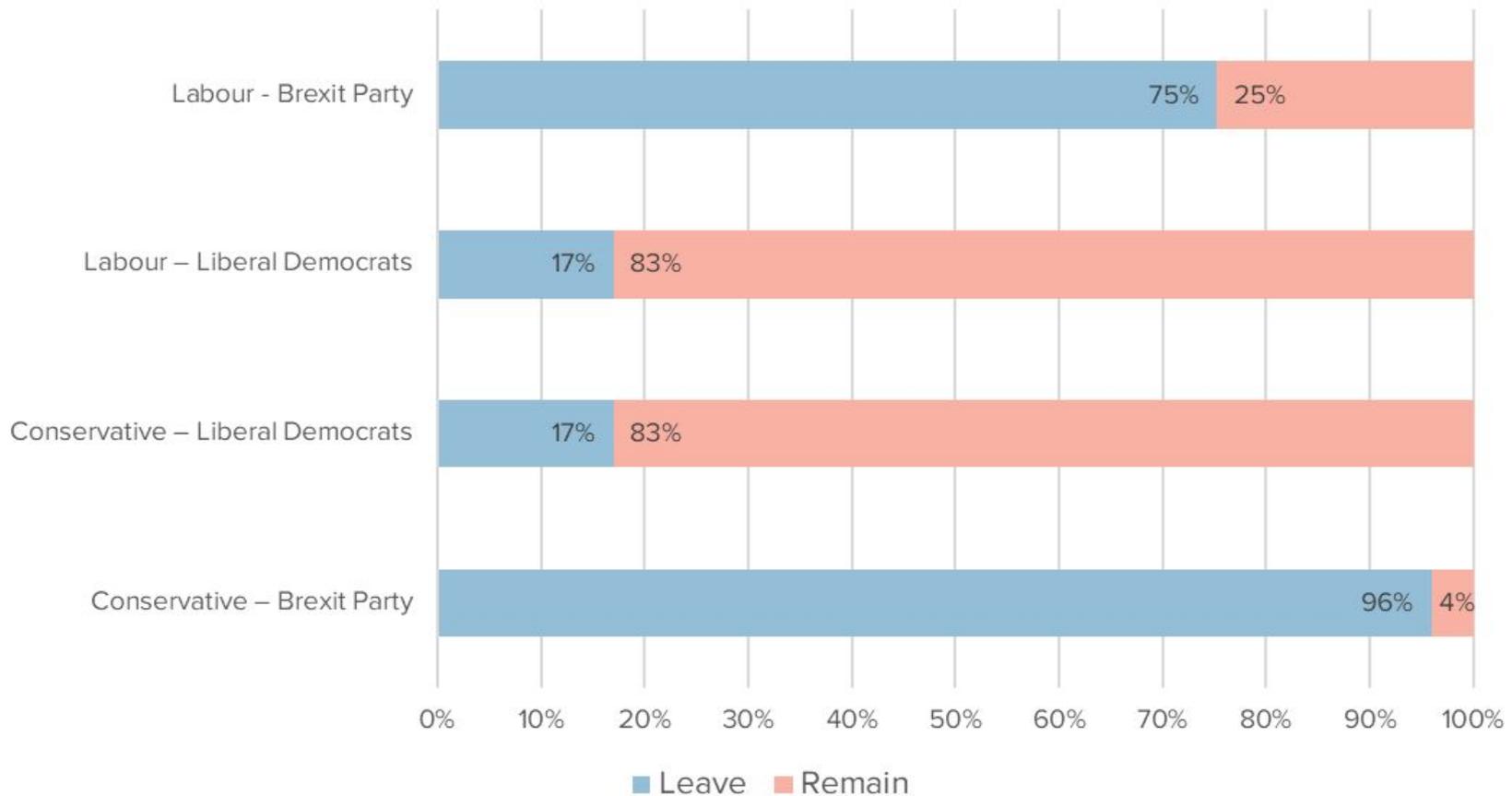
ONWARD >

Britain's stable two party system is collapsing. Both Labour and the Conservatives have lost c. 50% of their 2017 votes.

Change in vote share: 2017 vote to current vote intention

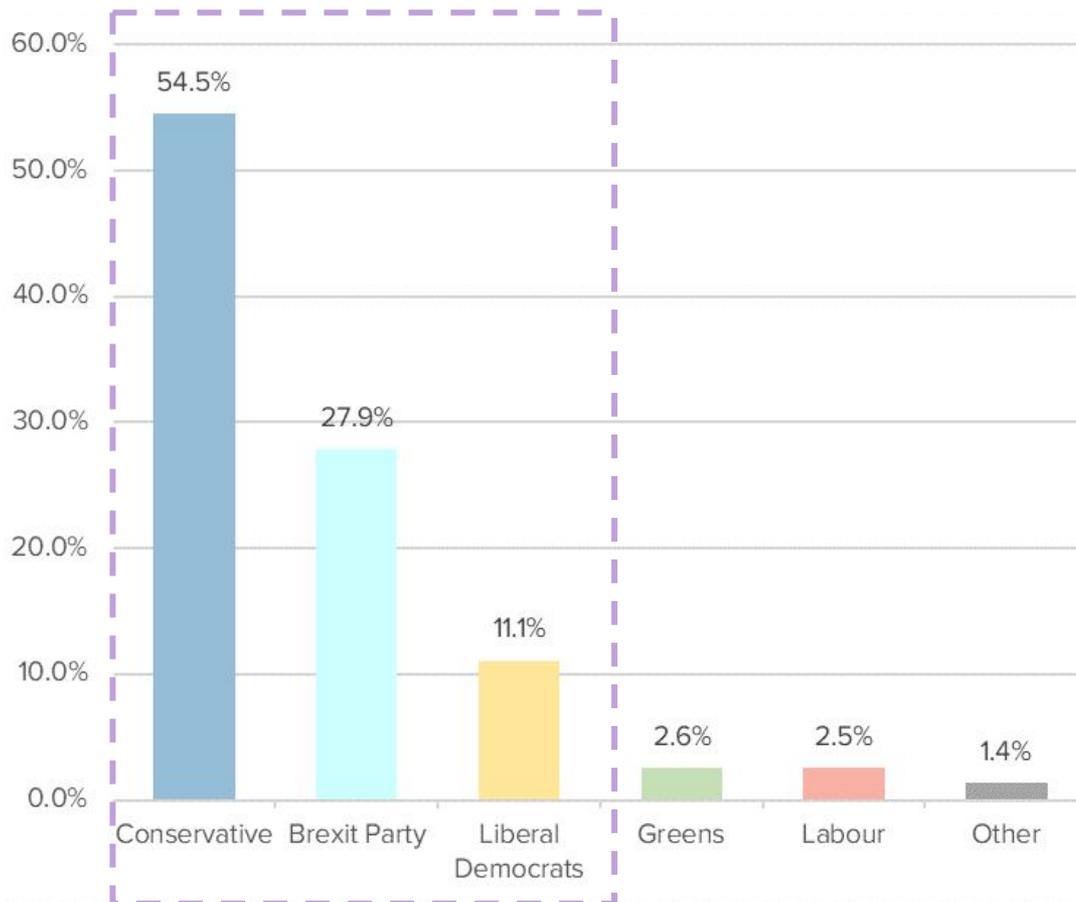


The primary driver of fragmentation is Brexit, which has split the established party coalitions and their defectors.



# The Tory coalition splits three ways: 93.5% of 2017 voters would remain loyal or vote for the Brexit Party or Lib Dems

Conservative 2017 vote by current voting intention



45% of 2017 Tory voters would not vote for them again if an election were called today.

3.8 million voters would go to the Brexit Party, 1.5 million to the Liberal Democrats, and around 350,000 to Labour.

**These 5 million voters will decide Conservative fortunes at an election.**

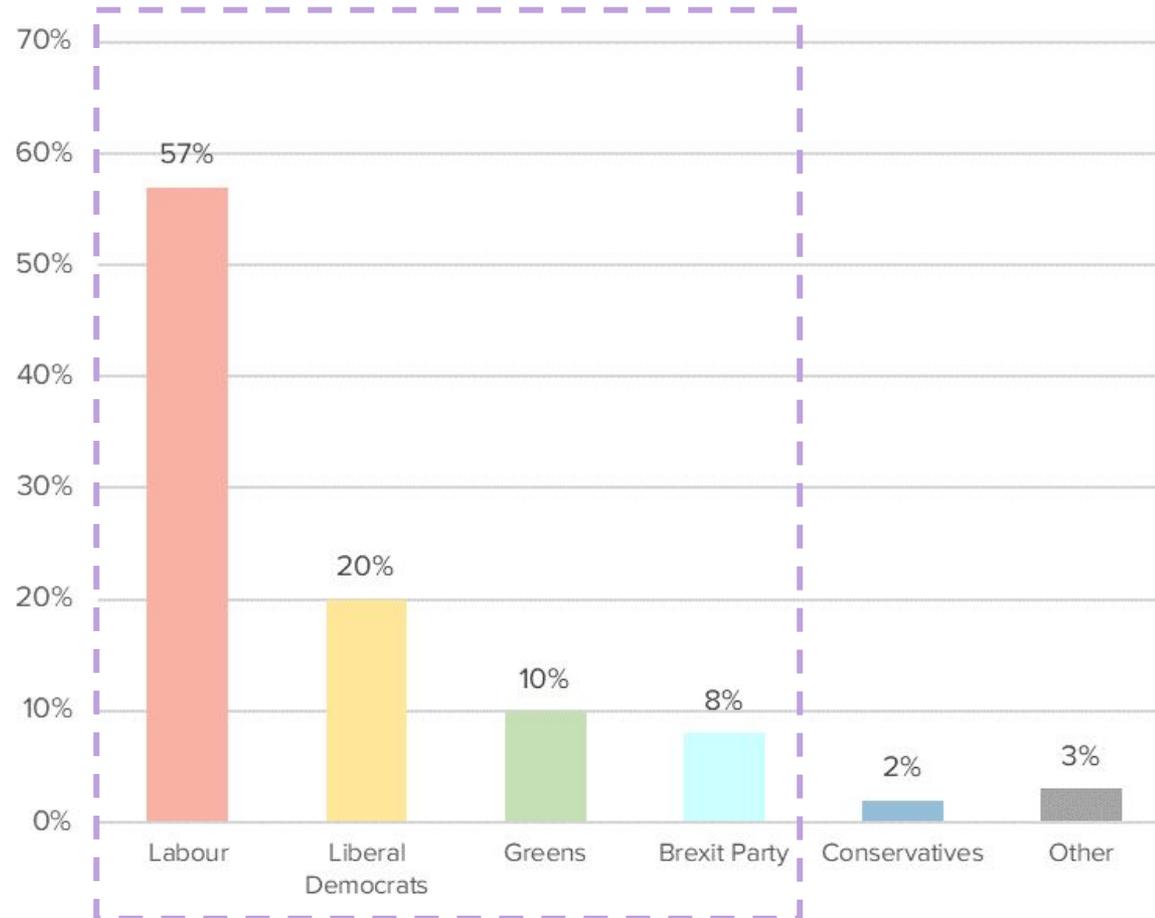
## Conservative voter groups are demographically distinct

- Core Tories are most economically stable and urban.
- Brexit Party switchers are older, less educated and Leave voters.
- Lib Dem switchers are younger, better educated and most non-urban.

Demography	Lib Dem defectors	Core Tories	Brexit Party defectors
% Over 55	40%	52%	57%
% in Top socio-economic class	7%	18%	12%
% Degree	41%	32%	25%
Urbanity <i>(rural / suburban / urban)</i>	28 / 49 / 23%	22 / 40 / 38%	26 / 48 / 26%
% Voted Leave	12%	67%	96%

# The Labour core vote has held up better, but defectors split three ways, making it harder to reunite the tribe

Labour 2017 coalition by current vote intention



57% of 2017 Labour voters intend to vote for them again.

21% (2.7 million) intend to defect to the Liberal Democrats, 10% (1.1 million) to the Greens, and 8% (1 million) to the Brexit Party.

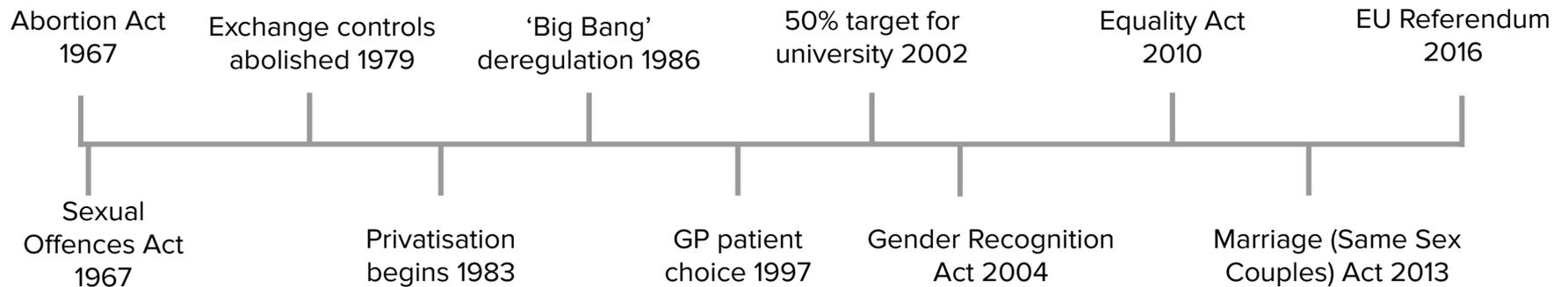
**Labour stand to lose a total of 4.8 million votes, given current voting intentions.**

# Labour voter groups are very different from one another

- Core Labour are more ethnically diverse and younger
- Brexit Party switchers 3x less likely to have a degree than Green switchers
- Green and Lib Dem switchers are united on Brexit but divided by age

Demography	Lib Dem defectors	Core Labour	Brexit Party defectors	Green defectors
% Over 55	28%	20%	36%	33%
% Under 35	36%	56%	34%	55%
% Degree	51%	36%	19%	70%
% White	89%	86%	93%	97%
% Voted Leave	11%	32%	75%	19%

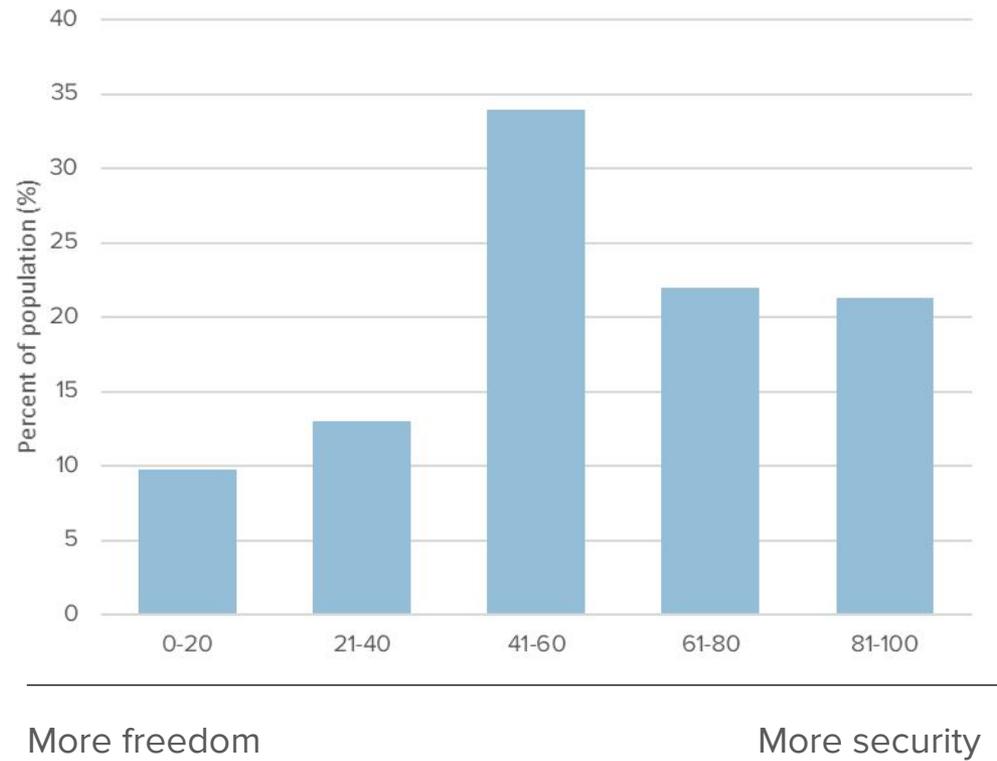
But does this narrow view obscure a shift from the post-war liberal consensus to a post-Brexit security one?



From the 1960s onward, the organising principle of British democracy - among all political parties - has been freedom.

Fifty years on, do people feel that freedom, choice and autonomy has gone too far? Do today's voters want security, community and belonging instead?

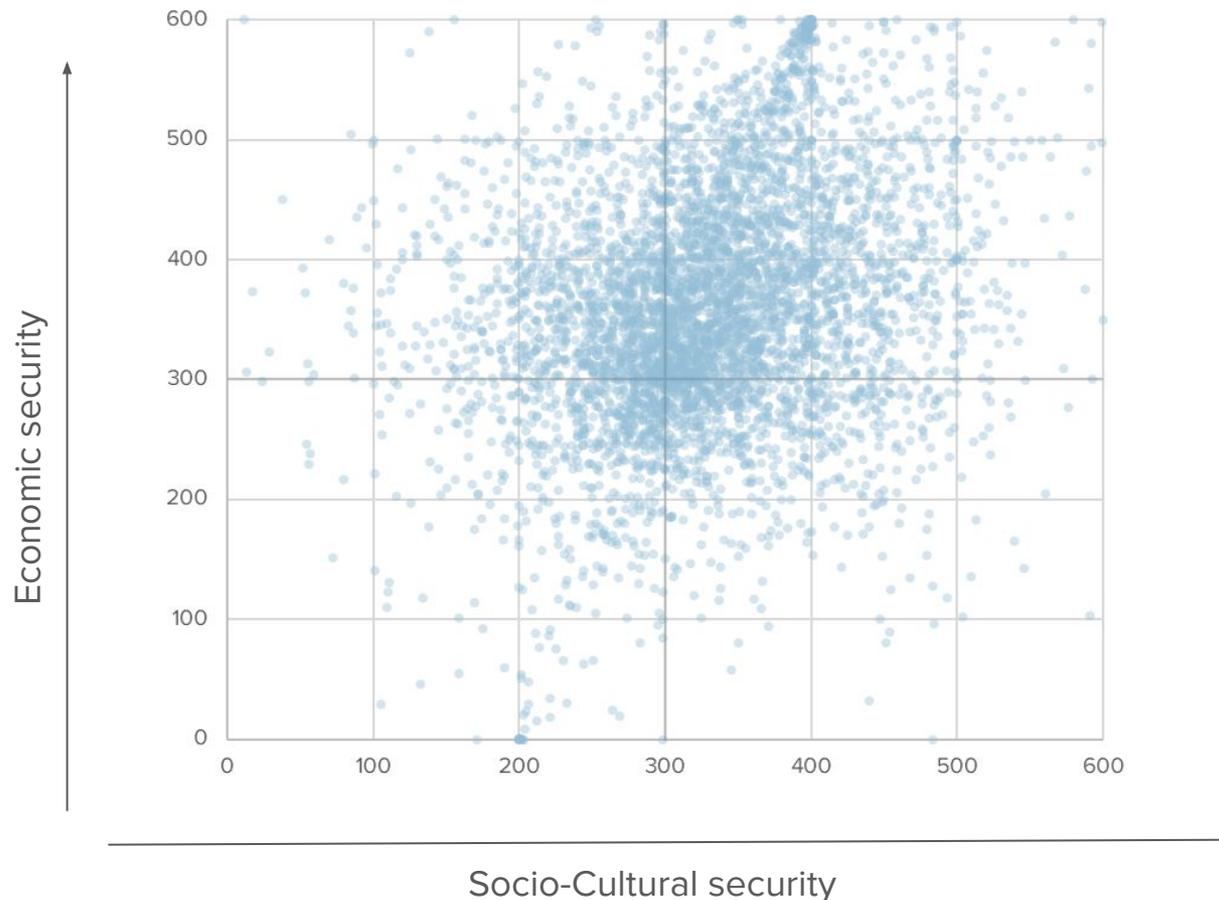
By 2-to-1 ratio, voters would rather live in “a society that focuses on giving people more security” (65%) than one that “focuses on giving people more freedom” (35%)



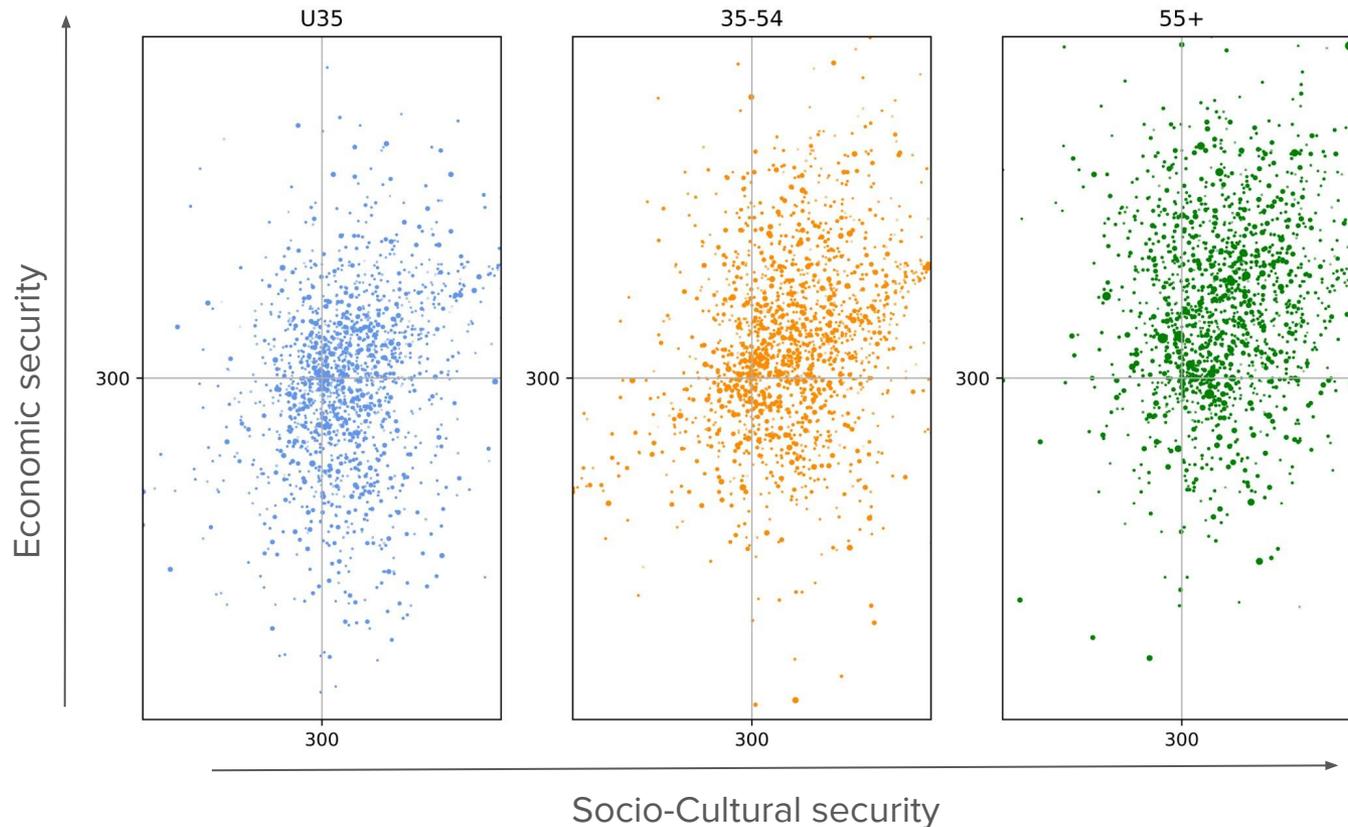
# Using a basket of questions, we devised four broad definitions of freedom and security



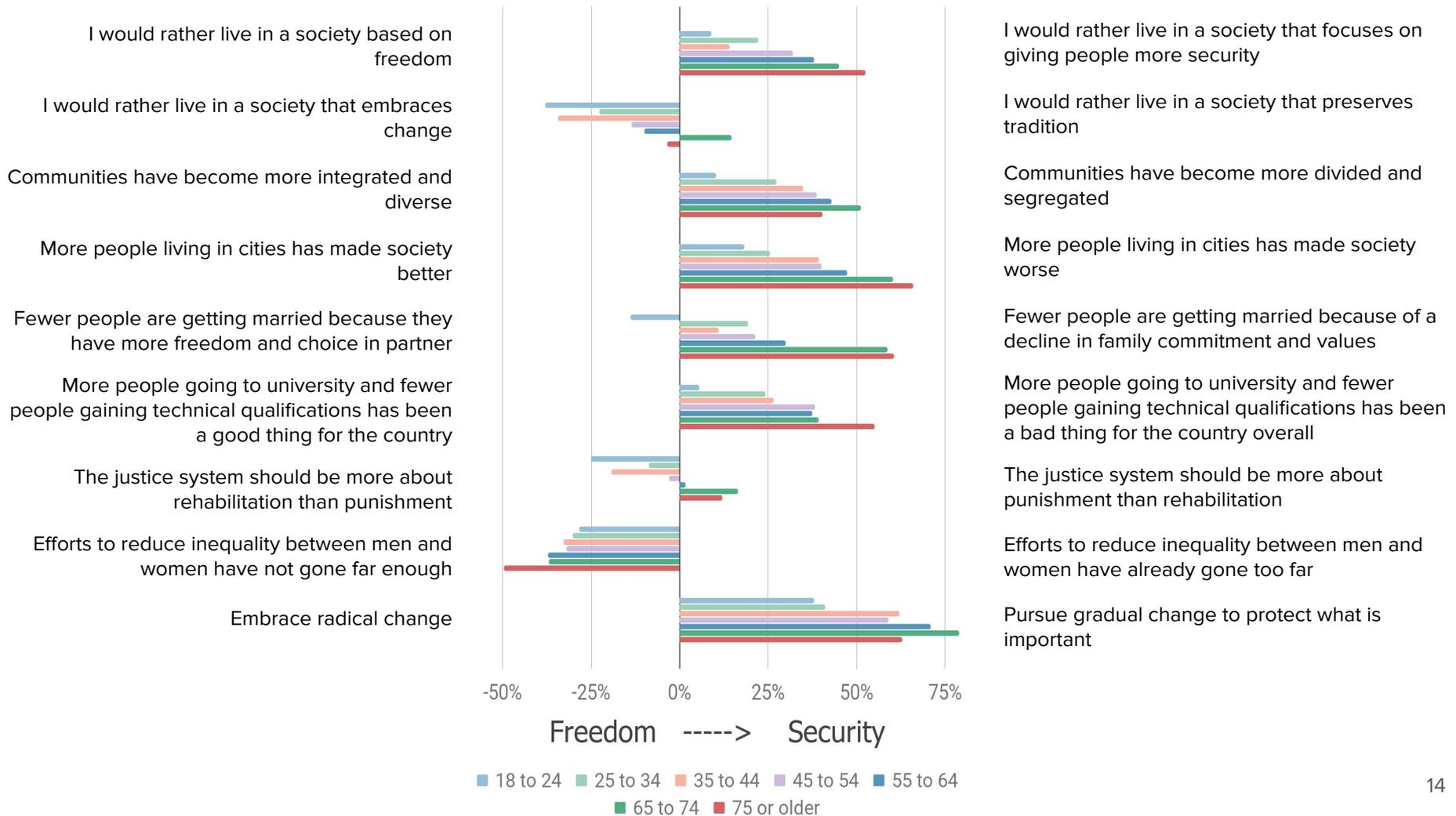
Using this composite measure, we find that voters are more inclined towards security rather than freedom across both social and economic axes



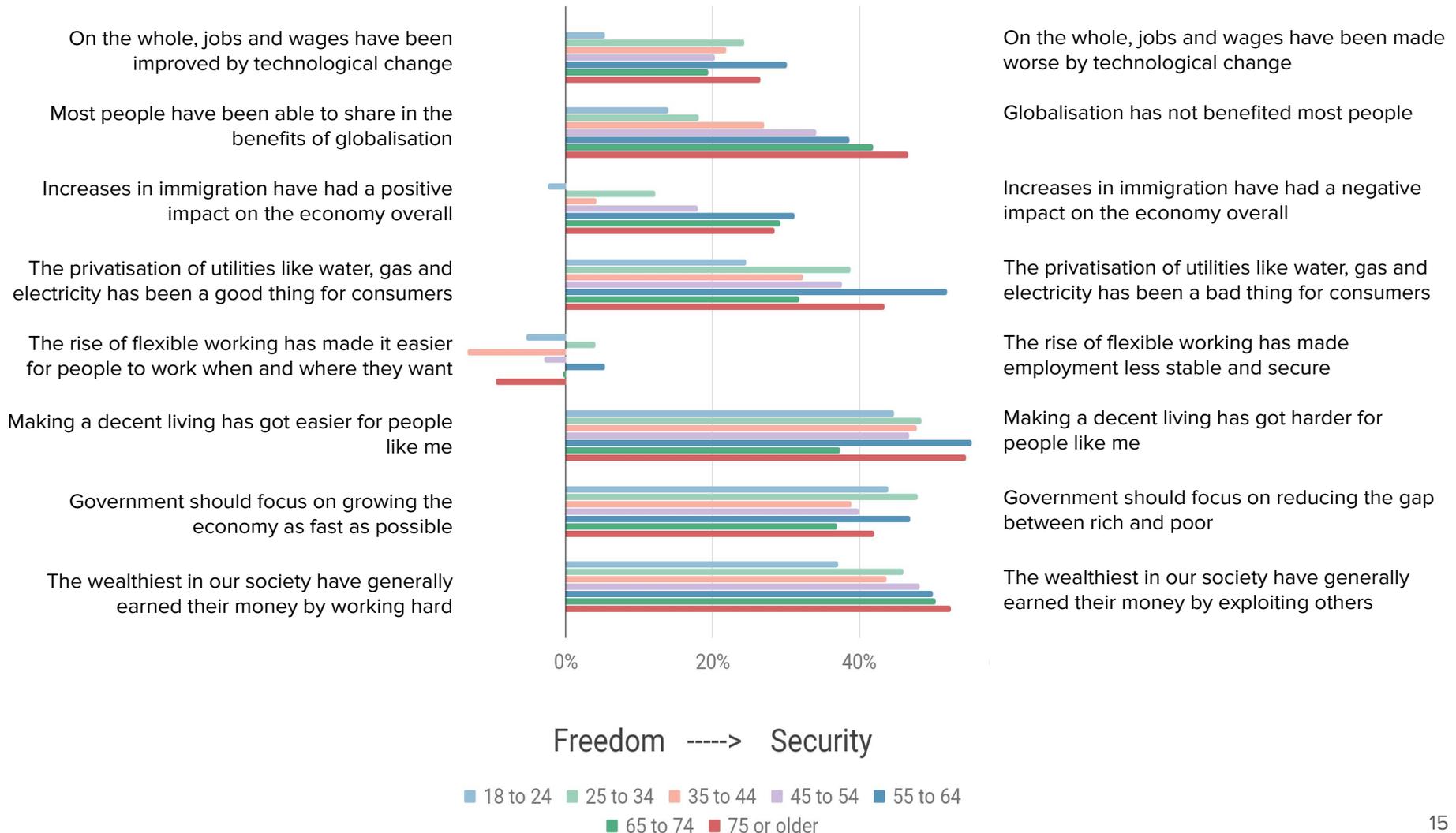
This is broadly true across age groups, but older voters are much more security-conscious



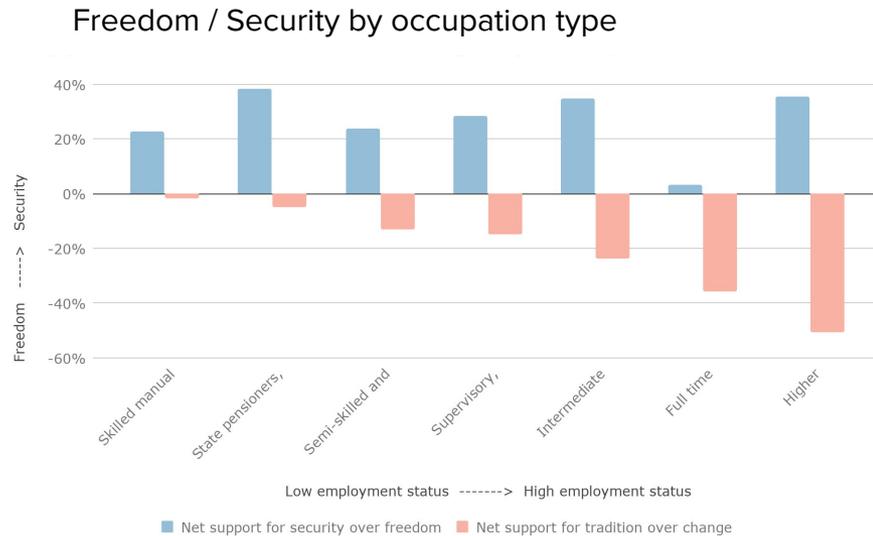
# You can see this clear age gradient on both the social and cultural dimensions....



# ... and even more clearly across the economic dimension



# Those with lower levels of education and lower economic status are highly security-conscious

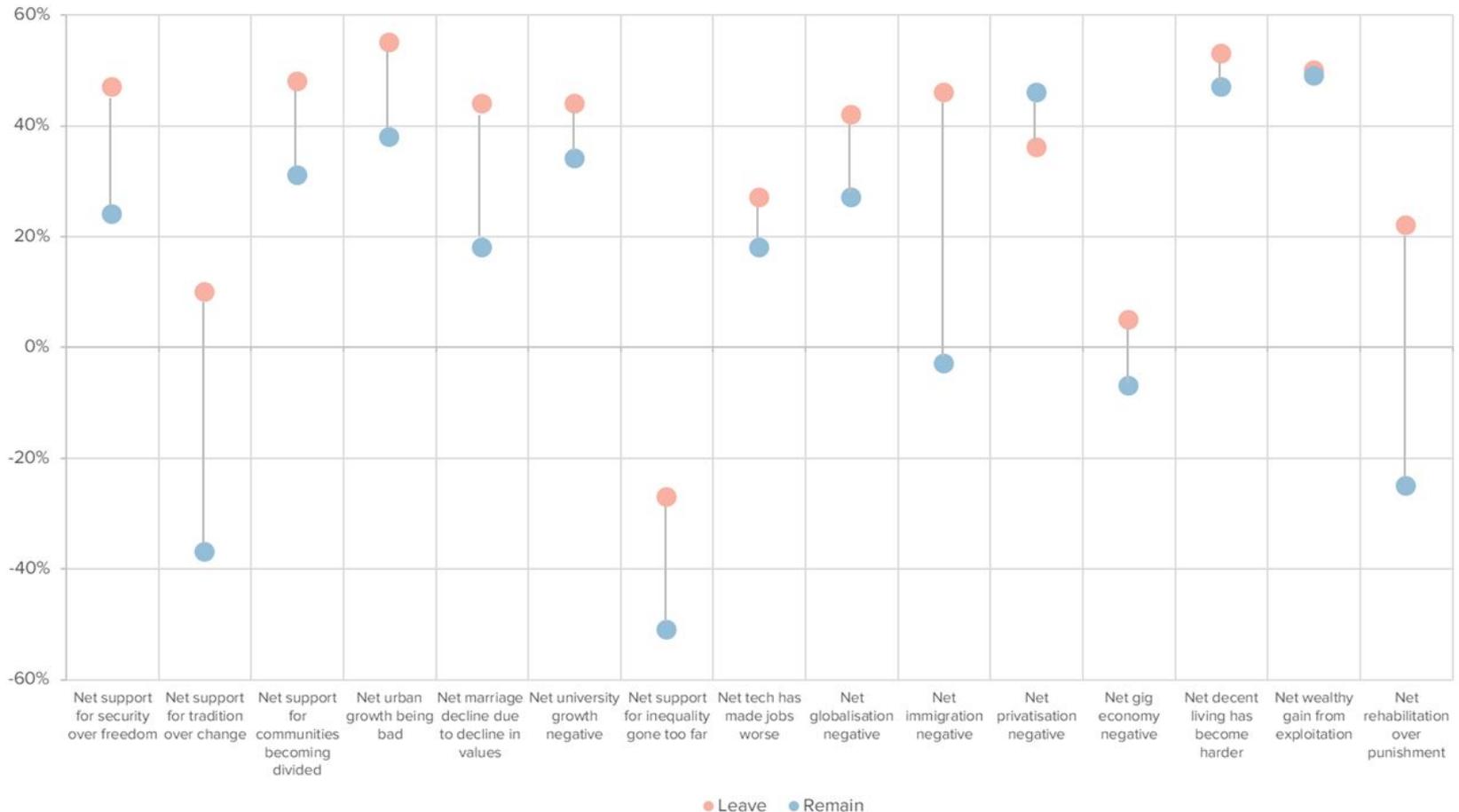


These demographic groups are most closely aligned with the core Tory vote.

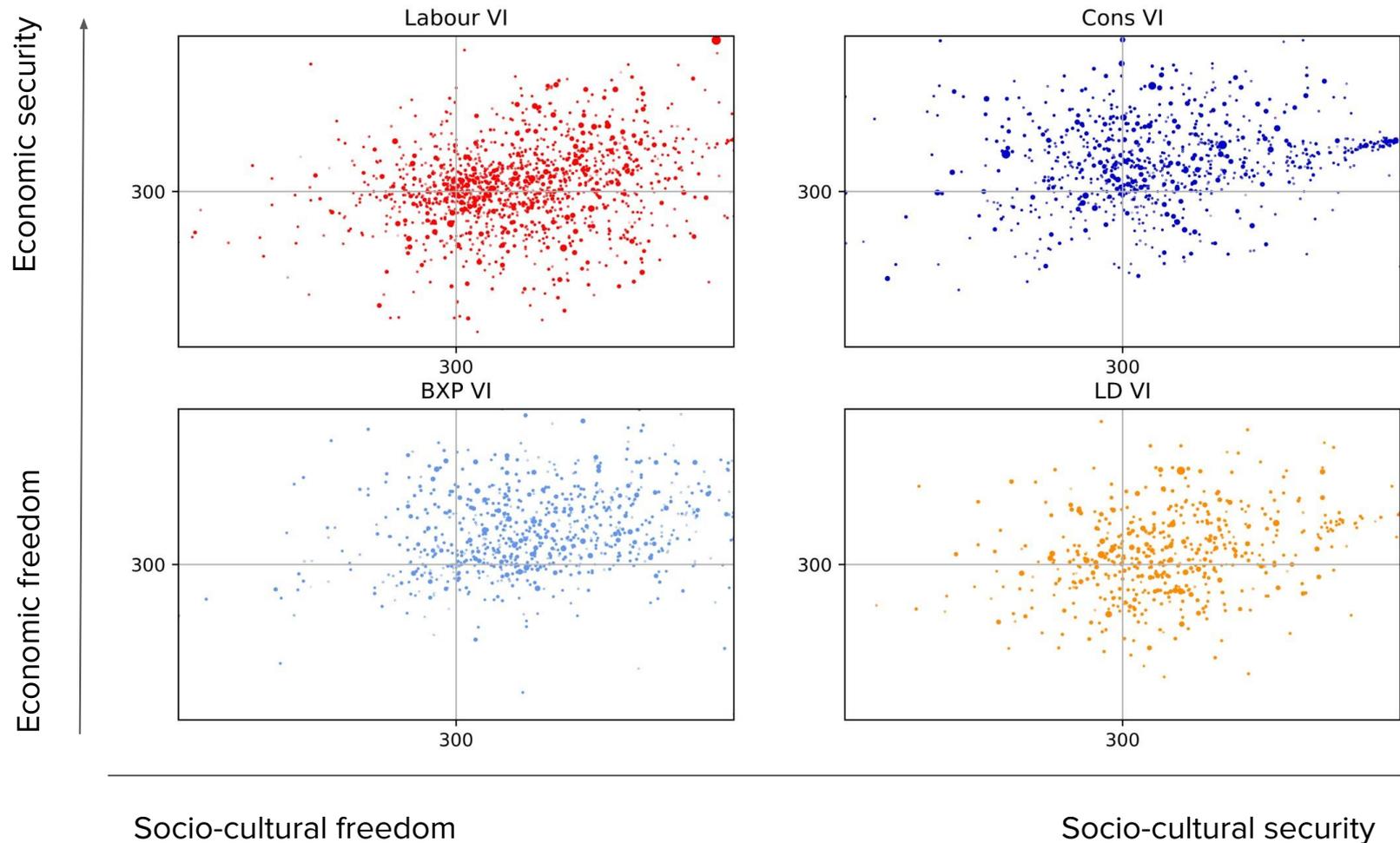
In 2017, the Conservatives won among C2DE voters. Previous Onward research has shown that the Conservatives are now the party of apprentices and lower-skilled workers, while Labour increasingly captures the graduate vote.

# Leave voters are considerably more security-focused

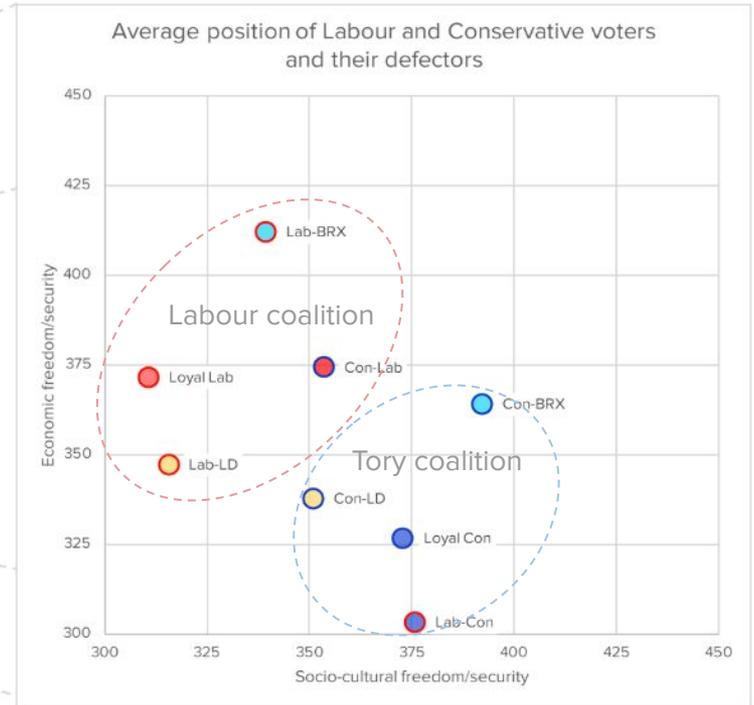
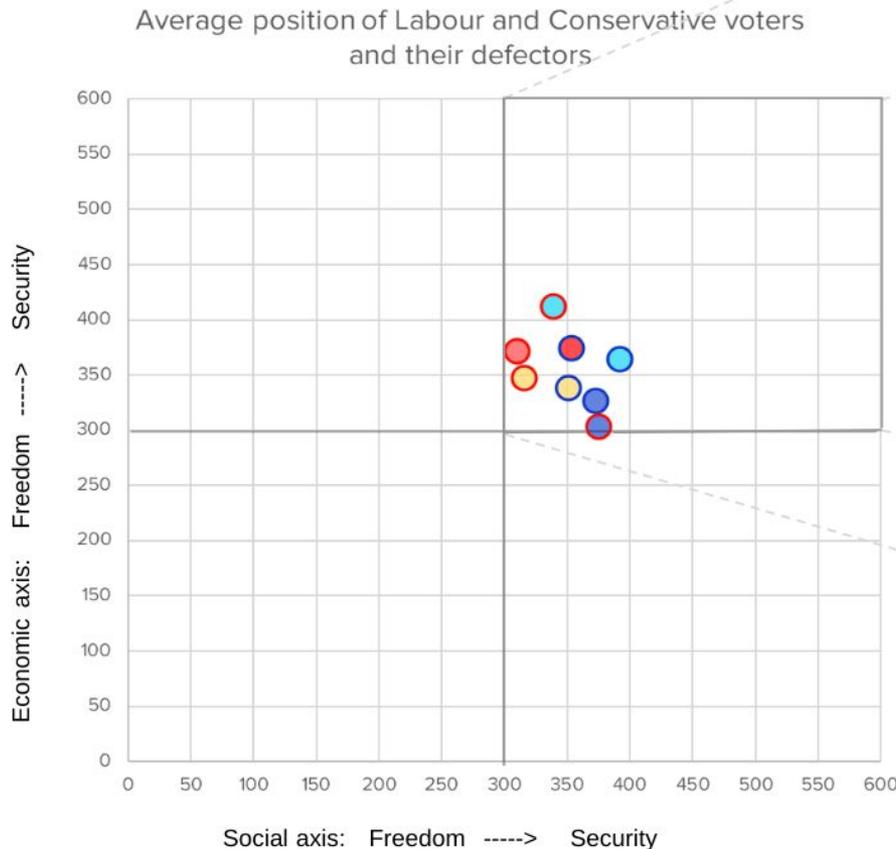
Voters who voted leave in 2016 are more security-orientated than Remain voters on every measure aside from privatisation.



The Brexit Party and the Conservatives are most security conscious. The Liberal Democrats are least.

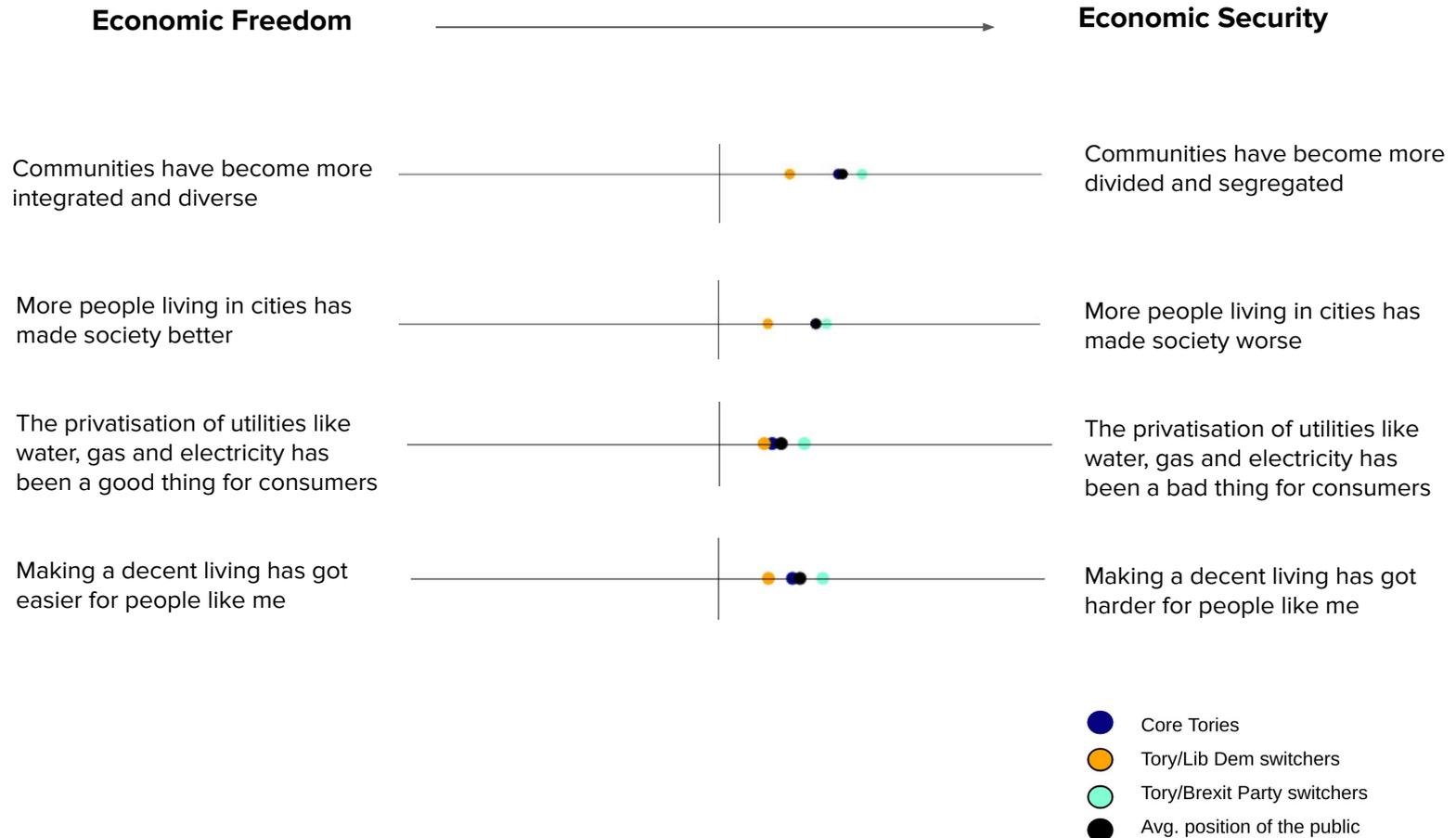


This is also true of all voting groups, including defectors. Conservative groups are pro-security over freedom



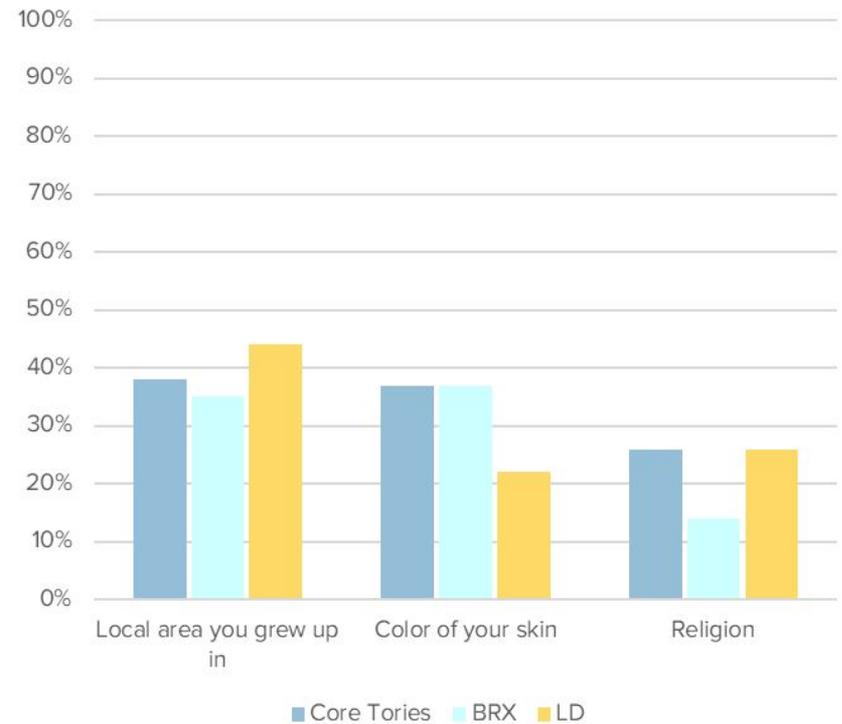
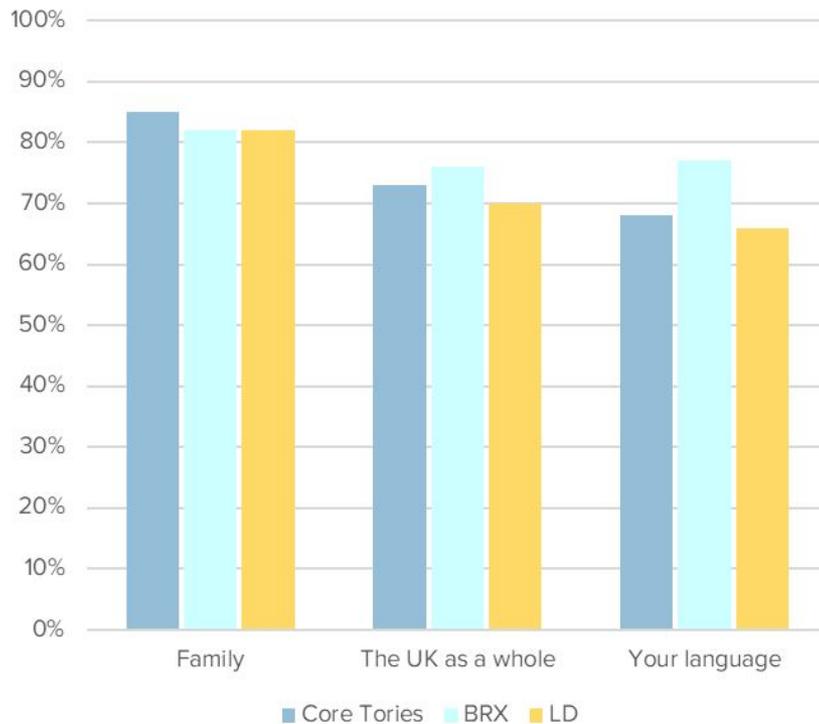
- Con-BRX
- Loyal Con
- Con-LD
- Con-Lab
- Lab-BRX
- Loyal Lab
- Lab-LD
- Lab-Con

# Even on economic issues, the Conservative coalition is aligned around security, not freedom

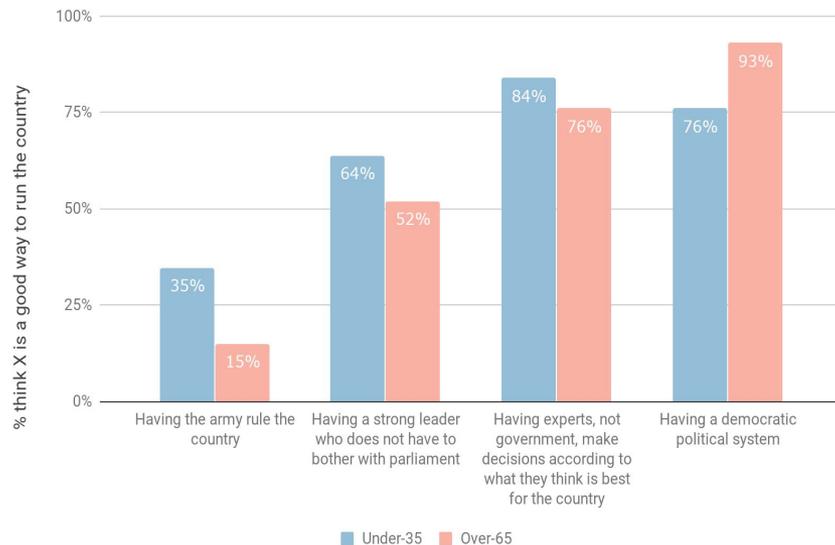


In terms of social institutions, people are highly supportive of family and the union, much less on religion and ethnicity

% who say X is very important to them



# Young voters and Londoners are considerably less supportive of liberal democratic principles



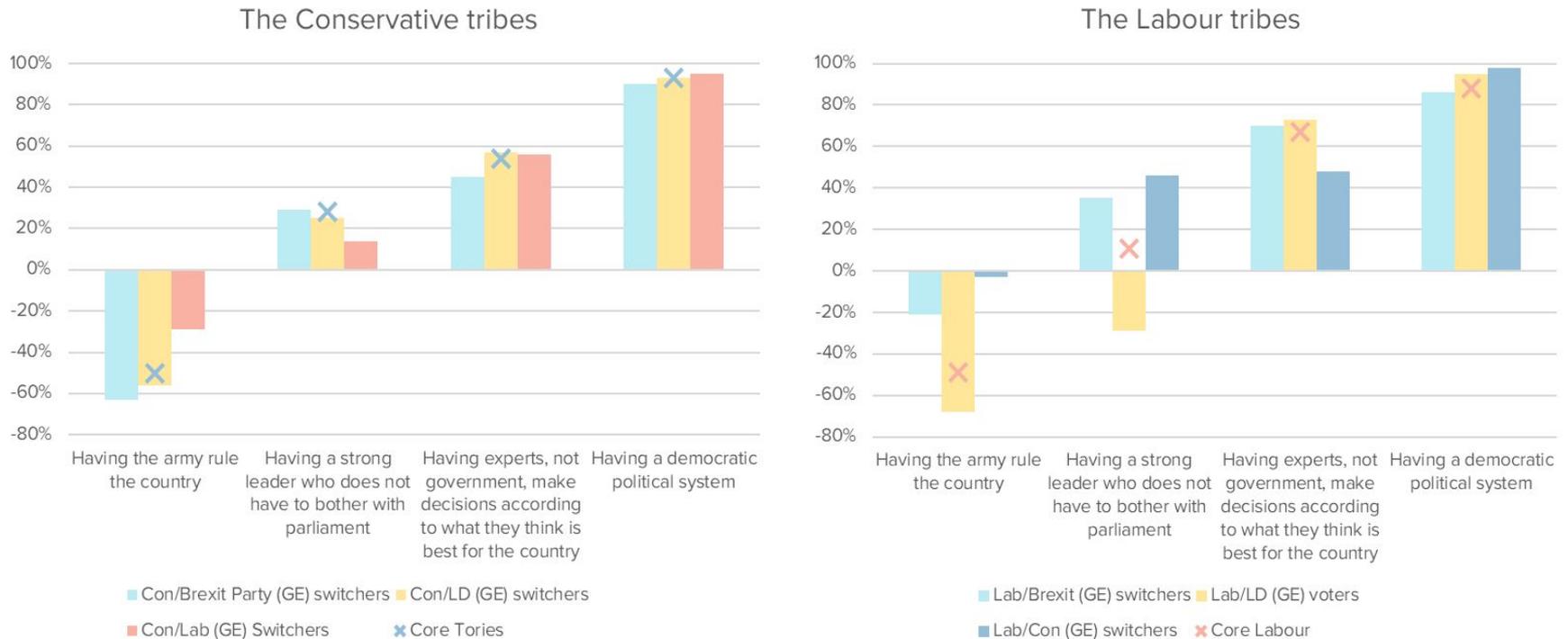
Young people are considerably more authoritarian than older generations:

- 64% of under-35s want a strongman leader, compared to 52% of over-65s.
- 24% of under-35s do not think democratic government is a good way to run the country vs. 93% of over-65s.

London is the most authoritarian part of the country, likely reflecting its younger and ethnically diverse population:

- 66% of Londoners support strongman leaders, vs. 54% in the North East.
- Support for army rule is more than twice as high in London (42%) as the North East (17%)

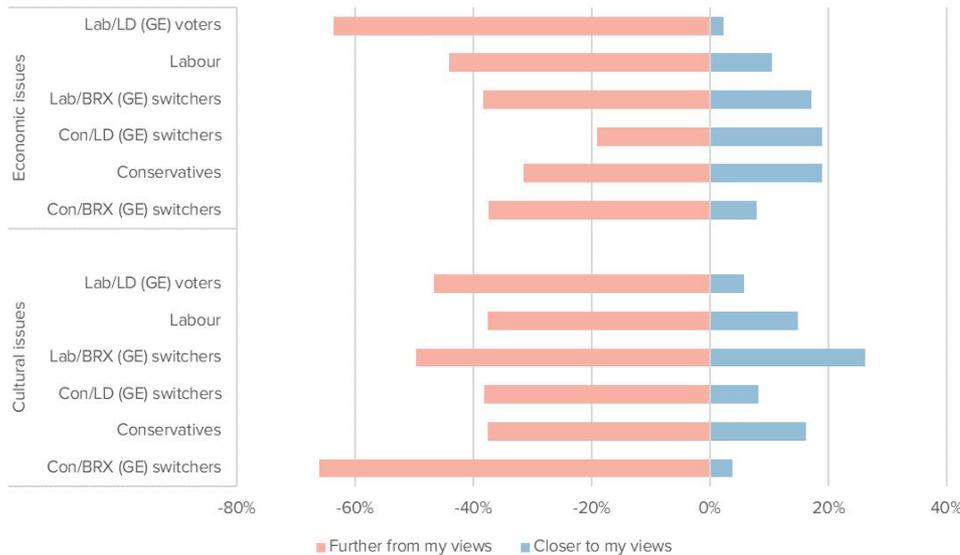
# The Conservative tribe is more supportive of authority than Labour's, which is split on liberal democracy



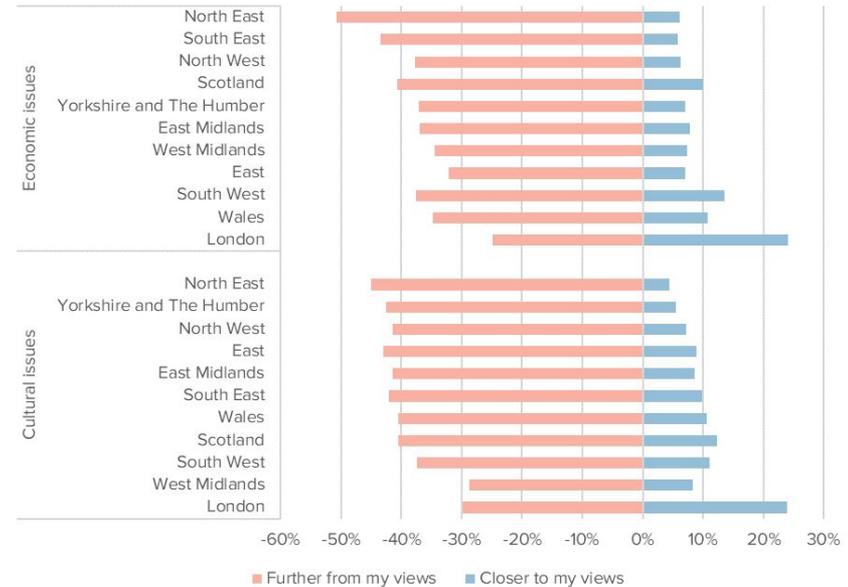
Lab/Brex (40%) voters are twice as likely as Lab/Lib switchers (16%) to support army rule as and nearly twice as likely to support strongman leaders (36% vs. 67%). They are also less democratic (95% vs. 86%).

# More people think the country has moved further from their views than closer to them

Vote intention



Regions



The two groups that think Britain has moved away from their views most over the last decade are:

- Labour to Lib Dem defectors on economic issues
- Conservative to Brexit Party defectors on cultural issues

Most voter groups think the country has moved away from them to a large degree.

London is the only part of the country that does not feel like Britain has moved away from them culturally or economically over the last decade.

People in the North East feel most alienated by the direction of the country.

## Emerging conclusions

1. After half a century of liberalising policy, from Jenkins to Thatcher to Blair, the post-war age of freedom is ending. In its place comes the era of security.
2. This sea change means there is little value for the Conservatives becoming the freedom fighters again. Voters do not want want more autonomy, choice and mobility. They want a government that:
  - a. Protects them, their families and British businesses from the modern world
  - b. Provide a greater focus on place, community and security
  - c. Invests in public services and institutions
3. This is especially true of the voters that the party needs for a majority coalition: Brexit Party defectors, Lib Dem defectors and Labour-Conservative defectors.

**Core message: reject the freedom fighters and pursue the politics of belonging.**